

PREFACE

It is the customary practice to report the major events of a General Assembly -the Invited Discourses, Joint Discussions and Joint Commission Meetings in Highlights of Astronomy. Vol. 8 reports the highlights of the XXth General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union, 1988 August 2-11, Baltimore, USA. The present volume contains the 3 Invited Discourses and papers presented at 7 Joint Discussion Meetings and 6 Joint Commission Meetings. Two Joint Commission Meetings will be reported elsewhere -JCM5 Spectroscopy of Individual Stars in Globular Clusters and the Early Chemical Evolution of our Galaxy (in summary only here, published by the Imprimerie de l'Observatoire de Paris) and JCM7 Star Clusters in the Magellanic Clouds (see Transactions of the IAU, Vol.XXB, report of Commission 37).

I am most grateful to the authors of the invited discourses R.M. West and V.I. Moroz, M. Schmidt and M. Rees for sending me the manuscripts so promptly. I am also indebted to the Chairmen of the Joint Discussion and Joint Commission Meetings for their organisation of the meetings and for the assembly of their material for publication. Unfortunately the deadline for receipt of manuscripts coincided with an extended postal strike in France which seriously hindered the preparation of the volume for publication.

The organisation of the XXth General Assembly was in the capable hands of my predecessor Dr. J.-P. Swings (1985-1988) and it was his prerogative to choose additional papers for publication in this volume: 5 such additional papers are included -2 included with the report of JD3 "Supernova 1987A in the Large Magellanic Cloud" and the remaining 3 on the microwave background radiation and cosmic nucleosynthesis at the end of the volume.

I have followed the precedent set in Vol. 7 in that the volume has no subject index. There is an extensive table of contents and author index which should make tracking down any particular contribution straightforward.

It is my pleasure to record my appreciation of the work by Dr. Swings in organising the XXth General Assembly of the Union, to the Authors and Meeting Chairmen for their work in producing the manuscripts as near the publication deadline as is possible in an imperfect world and, in particular, to Mrs. M. Orine of the Paris Secretariat for her considerable help in the final editing of this volume.

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1989 January 10